

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7101

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 2757

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MY, TH, SRV US

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEW OF ASIA

1. MY FAREWELL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN TURNED INTO A 70-MINUTE DISCUSSION OF THE ASIAN POLICY OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONCERN ABOUT THAILAND.

2. AS HE HAD DONE WITH AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK, PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS TO SOME DEGREE TURNING AWAY FROM ASIA. AS HE DEVELOPED THIS THOUGHT, REFERRING TO OUR PLANS FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT HIS WORRIES WERE ROOTED IN PART TO PAST CONVERSATIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW. HUSSEIN MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES LEE'S VERY PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE
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SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND TO WHAT LEE SEES AS AMERICA'S UNWILLINGNESS TO LIVE UP TO ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. HUSSEIN WAS BADLY BRIEFED ON THE SITUATION IN KOREA AND WAS NOT AWARE THAT WE INTENDED TO MAINTAIN A SIGNIFICANT AIR PRESENCE ON KOREAN SOIL.

3. IN REPLY I NOTED THE SECTION ON ASIA IN PRESIDENT

CARTER'S SPEECH AT THE UN AND ALSO RECENT STATEMENTS BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR EAST ASIAN AFFAIRS AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS, ALL OF WHICH MADE CLEAR OUR INTENTION TO CONTINUE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. WHAT SOME WERE REGARDING AS LACK OF INTEREST WAS MERELY A REFLECTION OF A RELATIVE STRENGTH AND TRANQUILITY OF THE AREA. THE ATTENTION OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION OF NECESSITY WAS FOCUSING ON CRISIS POINTS. AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF EXCESSIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH SOUTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS, IT WAS THE SIGN OF HEALTH THAT THE DOCTOR'S CAR WAS NOT PARKED AT THEIR FRONT DOOR.

4. REFERRING TO HIS OBSERVATION TO ME IN A PREVIOUS CONVERSATION THAT AMERICA'S MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STABILITY OF THE AREA WOULD BE IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD, I NOTED THE PRINCIPAL POINTS IN THE U.S. POSITION ON THE CIEC WHICH I HAD DISCUSSED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER A FEW DAYS AGAO, AND SAID THAT IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE CLEAR ITS INTENTIONS TO RESPOND TO THE INTERESTS OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD IN WAYS THAT WOULD BRING SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS TO MALAYSIA AND ASEAN. HUSSEIN SAID HE FOUND THIS VERY ENCOURAGING AND RESTATED HIS POSITION THAT MALAYSIA MUST DEAL ITSELF WITH ITS OWN SECURITY PROBLEMS AND CAN DO SO BEST FROM THE BASE OF A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER NEXT REFERRED TO VIETNAM AND ASKED IF I THOUGHT THE VIETNAMESE WOULD ALLOW THE RUSSIANS TO

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ESTABLISH A NAVAL PRESENCE AT CAM RANH BAY. I SAID THAT AFTER THE FALL OF SAIGON THERE WAS SOME SPECULATION THAT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN, BUT THAT IN THE INTERVENING TWO YEARS THERE WERE NO INDICATIONS, THAT I WAS AWARE OF, THAT THIS WAS LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE. AS HE HAD DONE WITH PEACOCK, HUSSEIN REFERRED TO THE U.S. WEAPONS LEFT BEHIND IN VIETNAM, BUT NOTED THAT IN THE RECENT THAI-MALAYSIAN COOPERATION AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS IN THE BORDER AREA, THEY HAD FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF ANY FLOW OF AMERICAN WEAPONS TO THE TERRORISTS.

6. CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO THE SITUATION IN THAILAND. HUSSEIN SAID THAT HE WORRIED ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE THANIN GOVERNMENT AND THE CHANCE OF ANOTHER COUP. HE NOTED THAT THANIN HAD NO POLITICAL BASE AND THAT IN HIS EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE CORRUPTION AND PROVIDE EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION, HE WAS FORCED TO TRED ON THE TOES OF THE MILITARY LEADERS ON WHOM HE HAD TO DEPEND FOR SUPPORT. CORRUPTION, IN HIS VIEW, WAS THAILAND'S

MAJOR PROBLEM, AND IN THE LONG RUN THE FUTURE OF A
NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN THAILAND WOULD DEPEND
MORE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S CAPACITY TO PROVIDE HONEST,
EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT THAN TO ANYTHING THE INSURGENTS
OR THEIR INDOCHINESE BACKES MIGHT DO.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 2757

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. HUSSEIN SAID THAT IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THE THAI
KING HE HAD GIVEN FIRM ASSURANCE THAT MALAYSIA WOULD
NOT IN ANY WAY ENCOURAGE MUSLIM SEPARATISM IN THE
SOUTHERN PROVINCES. HE SAID AT THE SAME TIME THAT THERE
WERE GROUPS IN MALAYSIA WITH STRONG RELIGIOUS AND FAMILY
TIES WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONDITIONS OF THE
MUSLIM CITIZENS IN SOUTHERN THAILAND, AND HE URGED THE
KING TO ENCOURAGE HIS GOVERNMENT TO FIND NEW WAYS TO
SHOW THAI GOVERNMENT CONCERN FOR THE
RELIGIOUS AND MATERIAL WELFARE OF THE THAI MUSLIMS. FOR
EXAMPLE, HE SUGGESTED THAT A MUSLIM BE APPOINTED GOVERNOR
OF ONE OF THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES. THE KING THOUGH THIS
WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA AND THEN WENT ON, TO HUSSEIN'S
EMBARRASSMENT TO INDICATE HIS DISSATISFACTION WITH MANY
OF THE CABINET MINISTERS.
HUSSEIN SAID ALSO THAT IN A PREVIOUS CONVERSATION WITH
THE KING DURING THE TIME OF KUKRIT, THE KING COMPLAINED

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TO HUSSEIN ABOUT THE LACK OF EFFICIENCY AND INITIATIVE OF THE THAI CABINET IN KUKRIT'S PRESENCE.

8. IN A RECENT MEETING OF THE GENERAL BORDER COMMITTEE, THE THAI SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS DURING A DINNER AND SOCIAL HOUR HAD MADE JOKES ABOUT COMING TO LIVE IN MALAYSIA IF THE SITUATION GOT TOO HOT FOR THEM. WHILE EXPRESSED IN FUN, THE MALAYSIANS FOUND THESE COMMENTS DISQUIETING, FOR ITS IS A COMMON ASIAN CUSTOM TO LET YOUR TRUE THOUGHTS EMERGE IN NON-SERIOUS BANTER.

9. CONCERNS ABOUT THAILAND, HE SAID, WERE SHARED ALSO BY SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA, AND THE THREE COUNTRIES WERE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO HELP. MALAYSIA WAS SENDING SOME SPECIALISTS TO HELP WITH ECONOMIC PLANNING. SINGAPORE WAS PLANNED TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN THE POLICE INTELLIGENCE FIELD AND INDONESIA AND CONSIDERING WAYS OF HELPING IN MILITARY TRAINING. HE HIMSELF HAD DISCUSSED WITH THE THAI KING THE POSSIBILITY OF LINKING THE VEGETABLE GROWING AREA AROUND CHIANG MAI WITH THE GROWING SINGAPORE MARKET AND THEY HAD TALKED ABOUT REFRIGERATED CARS MAKING AN EXPRESS RUN FROM THAILAND THROUGH MALAYSIA TO SINGAPORE.

10. ON MILITARY COOPERATION ON THE BORDER, HUSSEIN SAID HE WAS VERY ENCOURAGED. THE MALAYSIANS WERE PROVIDING THE BULK OF THE TROOPS, AND DESPITE SOME THAI SENSITIVITY, THE OPERATIONS, HE FELT, HAD BEEN VERY PRODUCTIVE, THE GAINS, HOWEVER, CAN BE STABILIZED ONLY IF THE MILITARY OPERATION IS FOLLOWED BY MORE EFFICIENT, HONEST AND HUMANE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. AS FAR AS THE GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION INSIDE MALAYSIA IS CONCERNED, HE FELT THAT THERE HAD BEEN SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR. ONE OF THE MAJOR INDICATORS WAS THE INCREASED READINESS OF THE PEOPLE OF ALL RACES TO PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE ON TERRORIST ACTIVITY. THIS WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND MOST ACCURATE BAROMETERS OF PROGRESS IN THE GOVERN-
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MENT'S SECURITY EFFORTS. HE NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT THESE JOINT BORDER OPERATIONS HAD CONSUMED SIGNIFICANT QUANTITITE OF AMMUNITION AND ASKED IF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S CONCERN ABOUT ARMS SALES WOULD CREATE ANY DIFFICULTIES FOR HIS GOVERNMENT IN PURCHASING REPLACEMENT STOCKS. I SAID THAT WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SPREADING

OF HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND COULD ASSURE
HIM THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OBSTACLES TO THE PURCHASE OF
AMMUNITION AND BASIC MILITARY SUPPLIES.
UNDERHILL

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